

The Book of Romans

Lesson 6: Peace with God; Adam and Christ -- Romans 5:1-21

There is a particular kind of exhale that comes when a long conflict finally ends. Picture two parties who have been at war, the treaty signed at last, the guns silent, the soldiers coming home. Or picture a child who has been estranged from a parent for years, standing on the porch, unsure of the welcome, when the door opens and arms reach out. That exhale, that settling of the soul, is what Paul describes in the opening line of Romans 5. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. After two chapters of courtroom and indictment, the verdict has been rendered, the war is over, and the relationship is restored.

This is not merely peaceful feelings or a calm mood. Paul means something objective: the hostility between God and the sinner has been removed. We who were enemies have been reconciled. We who were condemned have been justified. And now, Paul says, we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand, like guests ushered into the throne room of the King and told we are welcome to stay. From this secure standing, Paul says we can even rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, a hope that does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts.

Then Paul puts the love of God on display in the most stunning way. People will occasionally die for a good person, he says. But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Not after we cleaned ourselves up. Not once we became worth dying for. While we were still weak, still ungodly, still enemies, Christ died for us. This is the bedrock of all Christian assurance. If God loved us at our absolute worst, when there was nothing attractive in us to draw Him, then nothing in our future can separate us from that love.

Paul ends the chapter with a sweeping panorama of two men and two humanities. Through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and death spread to all. But through one man, Jesus Christ, came grace and the free gift of righteousness and life, and it overflowed far beyond the damage Adam did. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. Read this chapter and breathe out. The war is over. You are loved at your worst, welcomed into grace, and joined to a Savior whose gift is greater than all the ruin of sin.

Group Discussion: Paul says that since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). Many people, even believers, go through life with a nagging sense that God is displeased with them. What does it mean to have real peace with God, and how would living in that peace change the daily experience of someone who has been carrying low-grade guilt or fear?

Personal Reflection: Paul says God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (v. 8). Sit with that for a moment: God loved you and gave His Son for you at your absolute worst, before you had cleaned up anything. How does it affect you to know you were loved like that, and where do you still secretly believe you have to earn God's love?

Read Romans 5:1-21

Study Questions

1. Paul says, Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand (vv. 1-2). What is the peace Paul describes here, how is it different from a peaceful feeling or calm circumstances, and what does it mean that we now stand in grace?
2. Paul describes believers as those who stand in grace and rejoice in hope (vv. 1-2). Do you live day to day with a settled sense of peace with God, or do you carry a quiet anxiety that He is disappointed with you? What feeds that anxiety, and how might resting in your justified standing begin to quiet it?
3. Paul says we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (vv. 3-5). What does this passage teach about the purpose God can work through suffering, and why does this kind of hope not disappoint?
4. Paul describes a chain in which suffering, rather than destroying faith, can produce endurance, character, and hope (vv. 3-4). Think about a hardship you are facing or have faced. Have you experienced suffering mostly as something to escape, or as something God is using to form you? Where might He be building endurance and character in you right now?
5. Paul says that while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly, and that God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (vv. 6-8). What does the timing of Christ's death, for us while we were still sinners and enemies, reveal about the nature of God's love and the basis of our salvation?
6. Paul marvels that God loved us not after we improved but while we were still sinners (v. 8). Be honest about your own heart: do you tend to believe God loves you more when you are doing well spiritually and less when you are failing? How does the truth that Christ died for you at your worst free you from that performance-based view of God's love?
7. Paul reasons that since we have now been justified by Christ's blood and reconciled to God while we were enemies, we shall much more be saved by Him from the wrath of God, and we even rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 9-11). What does it mean to be reconciled to God, how does reconciliation go beyond being merely forgiven, and what confidence does it give us for the future?
8. Paul says we now rejoice in God Himself, no longer enemies but reconciled friends (v. 11). How would your relationship with God change if you truly saw yourself as His reconciled

friend rather than a guilty defendant still hoping for acquittal? What is one way you could enjoy God this week rather than merely serving Him out of duty?

9. Paul draws a sweeping contrast between Adam and Christ: through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all because all sinned; but the free gift in Christ is not like the trespass, for where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that grace might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life (vv. 12–21). What does this passage teach about how Adam's sin brought sin and death into the world, in what sense death spread to all, and how is the gift of grace in Christ even greater and more powerful than all the damage Adam's sin caused?
10. Look back across this rich chapter. Paul has shown you peace with God, the purpose hidden in suffering, the love of God poured out at the cross, reconciliation with God, and the triumph of grace over sin in Christ. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Romans 5:1–21 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: John 16:33, peace in Christ in the midst of tribulation; James 1:2–4, trials producing steadfastness; Ephesians 2:13–16, brought near and reconciled by the blood of Christ; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, the ministry of reconciliation; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 and 45–49, Adam and Christ as the two heads of humanity